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Taylor  
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1st

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St. social  
Hall



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Some of the early Combination plays included "The Crock of Gold," and "Boots at the Swan" staged on December 22, 1884; "Ingomar" and "Raising the Wind" on January 7, 1884 and "On the Brink" and "The New Man" on January 29, 1884. Actors whose names appeared prominently in these performances included John Crook, F. W. Giles, Ira N. Jacobs, A. Y. Duke, George J. Harbour, Ralph Jacobs, H. M. Aird, Amelia Clegg, Minnie H. Averett, Fred Clegg, Clara Alexander, J. W. Crook, E. D. Clyde, Fred Crook, Sophia Clyde, Mary Ann Giles (Cummings) and M. A. Baird.

Other plays produced by the Combination in its first season, some of which were taken to Park City, Midway and even Provo, included "Michel Earl," and "Handy Andy."

Traveling at one time to Park City, the dramatic company proceeded around a steep mountain dugway only to have their sleigh slip off the road and tip over. Scenery, stage props and frightened actors were thrown in all directions. Luckily, no one was injured, and after they gathered themselves and the effects together, they proceeded on to a full house at Park City.

Once, during a performance in the Midway Town Hall, Livingston Montgomery was required by the script to disappear through a trap door in the stage floor. There was no such door in the floor of the Town Hall stage, so Mr. Montgomery did the next best, and slipped out through a regular door. Outside the door he discovered that he was in the middle of a wintery night with below zero temperatures, with only a very light costume to cover him. To keep from freezing before he came back on stage near the end of the performance he began to dance a jig, and literally did a perpetual dance until the time came to re-enter. Needless to say, he chattered and shivered through the rest of the show.

The winter of 1887 was a particularly successful dramatic year, with many of the plays also presented in Provo. Some of the shows included "The Octoroom," "Warlock of the Glen," "Dutchman's Ghost," "The Lancashire Lass," and "Diamond in the Rough." Actors in these productions included H. M. Aird, George Cluff, J. W. Crook, Livingston Montgomery, Fred Clegg, George J. Harbour, R. O. Luke, J. E. Moulton, John T. Giles, Dan Baird, William Buys, Foster Cluff, Amelia Clegg, Pamela Fortie, Millie Cluff, J. A. Fortie, Emma Jeffs (Fortie), Heber Taylor and C. J. Wahlquist.

George Cluff was the leading participant in Heber dramatics from 1886 to 1890 and kept many activities going during those years.

The old Social Hall was remodeled about 1889 to provide better stage facilities and served until the early 1900's when it was sold to Mark Jeffs. Later, in 1903 it was used for meetings of the Heber Second Ward and continued as the ward chapel until 1914 when a new chapel was built by the ward.

Beginning about 1897, John Turner and his sons began building a

theatre and community building which became the center of social activities until the construction of the Heber Amusement Hall. The Turner Opera House, as it was known, built between 2nd and 3rd North Main, was constructed of brick and stone and featured a white maple dance floor. Brick for the building came from the Van Wagoner's lime and brick yard in Midway and sandstone was hauled from the John W. Crook quarry. Coal-oil lamps were hung from the ceiling, but were difficult to keep clean and filled, so they were later converted to carbide and then finally to electricity about 1909. Two large pot-belly coal stoves provided warmth in the winter. The large stage at the rear of the dance hall rose about three feet above the floor and featured a huge scenic drop curtain. The curtain scene depicted a family pulling a cart with a small donkey down a country lane. Mr. Turner provided many attractive pieces of scenery for groups who used the stage. Many of the panels were painted by Joseph Kirby, an artist from Wallsburg.

When the hall was to be used for dramatic productions, sawdust would be spread on the floor to protect the finish and some of the first folding chairs used in the valley were then set up. The first few rows were always sold as reserved seats at premium prices.

Traveling companies were booked at the Opera House, and when their performances were scheduled the people would dress in their best and make it a very special occasion. It was a common practice to carry a box of chocolates to enjoy with friends during the performance. Local performers would usually perform specialty acts during the performance while scenery was being changed.

John S. Lindsey and his family were a favorite traveling troupe with Heber audiences and always drew a large crowd. "Uncle Tom's Cabin," "Ten Nights in a Bar Room," "East Lynn" and other popular plays of the day were brought to Heber by this group. Later, Luke Cosgrove married a Lindsey girl and also brought good plays to Heber. Mr. Cosgrove, also a favorite in the valley, later achieved movie fame in Hollywood.

Della Pringle, another traveling performer, brought her own scenery and band for performances in the Opera House. Before the show started the band would play on Main Street to attract a good crowd. Prof. A. C. Lund from Brigham Young University would also come to the Opera House to present plays and musicals.

While it was a popular theatre, the Opera House was perhaps most widely known as a dance hall. At 2nd North and Main the Turner Mercantile Store, an early business place, had been built years before and clubs such as the A.O.U.W. used meeting rooms on the upstairs floor. A large building just west of the store was built about the same time with a dance hall on the main floor and a planing mill for lumber in the basement. Later this building was used by the Mutual Creamery and still later was remodeled for a laundry business. This building is still standing.